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Executive Summary (For Client Use Only)
DES, February 22, 2013

Process

1. In order to assess what communication issues exist, my work includes voluntary, confidential interviews with all employees from the group. No one is required to participate.
2. Essential to note is that this is *how* I work—it was NOT an investigation. That's not what I do. I cannot offer recommendations or training or mediation for people and about issues that are unknown or unclear to me. The themes and recommendations are from work I completed in April 2012.

Themes from Interviews

1. Air of fear, retaliation, walking on egg shells, looking for other jobs, hoping to not lose jobs
2. Dysfunctional workplace
3. Bullying
4. Lack of trust
5. Disrespectful communication
6. Lots of gossip, triangulation, and "coalition formation"
7. People like their actual jobs, but dread coming to work—lots of physical and mental stress

Tentative Conclusions

1. This workplace does NOT appear to qualify as a "hostile work environment," as it is defined legally. The workplace does, however, greatly lack civility and teamwork.
2. Regarding job performance, managers reported that their employees are hard workers.
3. Not all staff viewed managers as doing their jobs competently, but this appears to be mostly a product of weak employee-manager relationships.
4. Regarding sexual discrimination, one instance should be explored. HR will follow up on this and provide a definitive response in a timely manner.
5. Mismanagement and/or theft of property may be occurring. Again, HR will follow up on this issue. Note: #3 and #4 are out of my purview.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Job-Related

1. Signed PDs
2. Clear policies regarding personal/state phone use, access to keys, areas of the building and vehicles.
3. Conduct annual performance appraisals.

4. Clarify who needs what training and when for the entire Division. Everyone should have a development plan, and managers should expect employees to follow them.
5. Each Bureau Chief should gain a full understanding of what each staff member does. Bureau meeting could specifically address this; perhaps 1:1s with staff would be better. Maybe both are needed.
6. Improve information sharing among the Bureaus – Reduce “silo-ed” and “territorial” viewpoints.
 - a. Partnering/training could occur between Grants and other bureaus.
7. All staff should unite during exercises – to work as a team outside of the ordinary, daily activities.

Relationships

1. Address the romantic relationship among the staff – Many employees find this situation uncomfortable, at the least, and damaging to their jobs, at most. Perception of favoritism, whether accurate or not, is problematic for all employees.
2. Specific conflicts among staff should be facilitated/mediated by a third party. This would help the workplace by not allowing conflict to go unaddressed, and keeps the issues private, rather than known to the Bureau.
3. Address behaviors, rather than attributing these problems to people’s personalities. Assaulting employees’ personalities is offensive and rarely accurate. Personalities don’t conflict; behaviors do.
4. Address lack of trust in the division (workshop, guided discussion, small group work, individual conversations facilitated by a third party): All employees stated the climate is contributing to high stress levels. On a “scale” of 1 -10, many stated 9 or above the 10, like 15. Several employees reported effects on their physical and mental health.
5. Replace negative culture with a positive one: Provide appropriate recognition, make appropriate requests, and provide rewards/awards based upon performance.
6. Issue apologies where appropriate.
7. Address the overall relationship between DES and CSD. Refrain from “divisive language,” and from perpetuating the “us” v. “them” attitude. Perhaps the structure as it exists doesn’t quite work; Consider examining ways it might work better.
8. Regarding the negative reputation in communities, around the state, with some partners, and especially with local coordinators, the Division should unite around this common theme. No one wants to work an agency that is disrespected.
 - a. Each employee must explore her/his role in advancing this reputation.
 - b. As long as the staff is divided internally, the division will continue to send the outward message of not earning or deserving respect
 - c. Conduct specific meetings, focus groups, surveys, etc. to assess and address the negative relationships with locals.
9. Allow employees to deal with emotions, fallout and possible consequences of both the RiFs and the reorganization. Dealing with change is always difficult; under current circumstances, perhaps impossible.

Communication

1. Clarify chain of command to everyone in the division. Expect all to follow it. Outline consequences of not following chain of command.
2. STOP engaging in conflict on email.
3. Eliminate inappropriate and unprofessional communication (swearing, references to female employees as "bitches," - by males and females- yelling, harsh emails, threatening nonverbal communication {close proximity, etc.}, rolling eyes during exercises, walking out on conversations, unprofessional outbursts, jokes about more RiFs, mocking females, "good ole boy" comments by males, exceedingly high level of office gossip, including comments about people's sexual orientation, personal lives, morality, appearance ,and in some cases, their mental health). Provide Civility in the Workplace Training and Sexual Harassment Training.
 - a. Please note: The areas of gender-specific profanity, comments about looks, and sexual orientation must discontinue in order to prevent an actual "hostile work environment."
4. In conjunction with the Sexual Harassment training, review the department's policies, require employee signatures, and file the paperwork.
5. Most persons interviewed admitted they are part of the gossip problem, even though their complaints generally started with what others were doing. Training on "gossip at work" could alleviate this.
6. Communication training - How to be direct and respectful, rather than passive aggressive and/or outright aggressive.
7. Some managers are perceived as bullying and intimidating their employees.
 - a. To be fair, many managers feel beaten up by everything that has happened, as well. Frustration often leads to problematic communication. Management training could help alleviate this, as well as provide support for managers.
8. Additional trainings on Conflict Management and Setting Boundaries would be helpful.
9. Address employees' concerns that DES business is being discussed with and/or leaked to former employees, some of whom have legal action against DES. These need to be frank discussions, with ground rules and facilitated by a third party. Agreements should be drawn up and adhered to; if they are not, consequences should occur.
10. Some retaliation appears to be occurring, for employees doing something someone *thinks* they did, or actually did, including isolating persons to be responsible for the "outside consultant." These conversations should stop entirely.
 - a. Please note: Interviews were confidential. Speculating about who said what and to whom is entirely counter-productive. For one, you are probably wrong. Two, you might be surprised at the people who did speak up about difficult topics. Three, this type of thinking opens you up to the possibility that you could be (or already are) treating people you think are to blame in a different way. Any behavior that falls into this category would certainly be considered retaliation.
 - b. Changing anyone's responsibilities, duties, pay, expectations, etc. and/or talking behind her/his back certainly arouses suspicion of retaliation.

Individual Coaching

1. Volunteers - Specific issues
2. Managers for handling employee performance and communication